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PICTURESQUE GREECE

## HANNS HOLDT / HUGO VON HOFMANNSTHAL Pictitresqueg greece

ARCHITECTURE * LANDSCAPE

Life of The people

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Of all our journeys, that to Greece is the most spiritual. Of that semi-sensual curiosity, ever the secret underlying base of so many journeys, there is little that speeds us on our way to Greece. And when, ere we have set foot upon her shores, she greets us with that which we had thought of least: her entrancing and wholly eastern perfume distilled from orange blossoms, acacias, laurels and thyme, we are, for a fleeting moment, almost startled.

Ours was a spiritual pilgrimage, and we had forgotten that from this landscape might emanate another perfume than that of memories alone. We confront that which we wish to see with too much spiritual impatience. In us dwell too many souls alloying their aspirations with our own towards these hills and temple ruins. We arrive lost in the company of a crowd of shadow-like companions. But they desert us the moment we step on shore, sense the actual rocks beneath our feet, inhale the fresh and sunny air. 'Tis then we stand in the forecourt of our desires and feel that we have lost our guides. But a short time ago, while our ship was sailing the Sicilian, "Greater Grecian" main, Goethe was with us. We leave him as we left Italia's shores. And suddenly we feel that he is a Roman. The great head of Juno. Ludovisi intervenes between us and him. We remember that he never saw a real antique, nor a statue of the fifth century. And the placidity into which, together with Winckelmann, he steeped his antiquity is to us the condition of the German soul at a certain moment: nothing more. But also the great intellectuals of the last century who unveiled a darker and wilder antiquity - also their intuition suddenly possesses no longer the same luminousness. Burckhardt, his countryman Backofen, Rhode, Fustel de Coulanges - incomparable interpreters of the dark foundations of the Greek soul, bright torches that lit up a graveyard world - yet there is something more here. Here is no sepulchre. Here there is so much light, and they never breathed in this light. All their visions are as the colour of lead in this lustre, and we leave them far behind us. - The first impression of this landscape is sfern, set foot in it where you may. It casts off all dreamy visions, be they historical or otherwise. It is dry, close-fisted, expressive, and strange as a fearful emaciated countenance. But on it shines a light the like of which the
eye has never seen before, a light that fills it with such joy that it would seem the eye had first learnt the meaning of seeing to-day. This light is at the same time inexpressibly mild. It shows up clearly the slightest detail with such distinctness, a gentle distinctness that sets the heart beating higher, and it surrounds that which is nearest - I can but use a paradox - with a luminous enveilment. It can only be compared with spirit. Things must exist thus in a wonderful intellect, so wakeful and so restful, so set apart, so joined. But how joined? Not by Stimmung. Nothing is more remote here than this gossamer psycho-sensual dream element. - No, by the spirit itself. The light is bold, and it is young. It is the symbol of youth penetrating to the very core of the soul. Hitherto I had looked upon water as the most wonderful expression of that which is eternally young. But this light is still more emphatically so.

They tell me this is the light of Asia-Minor, the light of Palestine, of Persia, of Egypt, and I understand the unity of history that has determined our inner fate since thousands of years. Troy, Xenophon's Ten Thousand, Cleopatra, and also Byzantine Theodora. All these thousand-year old adventures become both comprehensible and uniform as the parts of a single melody. Odysseus' ruses, Platon's irony, Aristophanes' impertinences: there is a wonderful identity in all, and the formula of such identity is the light.

Everything that lives in this light lives fully and really: without hope, without longing, without grandezza. It lives. It is this: "they live in light". To leave this light, to become as shadows; it was this that was most dreadful. For this there was no consolation. "Rather a serf there than Achilles here". - He who has not seen this light does not understand such words . . . . From a hill I see somewhere a few goats on a slope. Their climbing, the movement of their heads; this all is real, and at the same time as though drawn by a supreme artist. The air invests these creatures with something divine beyond their animalism. This light is the perpetual marriage of the spirit with the world. A steep summit, a pine-tree or two, a small wheat-field, a tree with old roots clinging to the riven rocks, a cistern, an evergreen shrub, a flower: Individually they have no aspirations to blend with the whole, each lives unto itself, but in this light to be alone does not spell solitude. Here or nowhere the individual is born; but he is born to a divine and companionable fate. In this air one is magnificently secluded - but no more deserted than one of the gods, wherever he might appear or pass through the air. And here all creatures are gods. This pine, beautiful as a column of Phidias, is a goddess. And of the spring flowers scattering their perfume and splendour from meadow-side it has been said - and rightly said - that they stand there like little gods.

Here, man, as we understand him, was born, for here harmony of measure was born. The proportions of a temple remnant, three columns and a ruined gable shadowed by a solitary oak whose foliaged crown looks heavenwards are all so beautiful that they almost rend our soul, even as the deepest harmonies
of music rend the soul. The sky itself, the height of the apparantly solid dome, is somehow included in the magnificent computation. And when a man steps between the columns, a peasant seeking a patch of shade, or a spot to eat his frugal meal, a shepherd with his dog, the whole scene becomes so beautiful that our heart swells with joy. Nothing we know of their ways, and manners, and cult appeals directly to our power of imagination. Their ceremonies, as far as archaeology devulges them to us, are as unpleasant as the sight of dancers for him who does not hear the music. We cannot grasp anything of their mysteries, save the relation of the human body to the stone-built sanctuary.

The view from Acro-Corinthus extends to two seas with many islands, the snow-clad summit of Parnassus and the Achaian Mountains. Light creates out of all these an order that fills the heart with bliss. We know no better word for this than music. But it is more than music. - And what a lesson this light gives to the thoughtful observer! Here is no exaggeration, no admixture. Let each one see for himself. But see it in its pristine purity. Seek not to discriminate, nor to group. Each stands in its alloted place, the whole is conjoined. Be calm, breathe, enjoy and sense your life.

Nothing is more difficult than to guess in this landscape whether an object be far or near. The light makes it distinct, and at the same time spiritualizes it, makes it but a breath. But the power in a movement at a distance of one hundred and fifty paces is great. The beckoning of an Agogiate calls forth from a distant rock crevice the shepherd with his water skin. It is wonderful to think how in the Battle of Salamis the sea captains issued their commands on their gaudy wooden bridges which never could have been conveyed by human voice through the roar and din of battle, and how the Grecian eye seeking the outstretched hand of Themistocles in this atmosphere of vibrating silver decided towards evening the fate of the world.

The Homeric gods and goddesses are always stepping out of the bright light. Nothing seems more natural as soon as one knows this light. We are from the north, and the semi-darkness of the north has formed our imagination. We divine the mystery of space, but we considered no other means of glorifying it possible than Rembrandt's chiaroscuro Now here we recognize that there is a mystery in full light. This light shrouds forms in mystery and familiarity at the same time. They are but trees and columns which meet our eyes in this light; or mayhap the mute bodies of the Erechtheum Caryatides, half virgins, half columns. And yet their corporeal beauty is of irresistible power in this light. But the gods and goddesses were statues of flesh and blood. From beneath the heavy and almost hard forehead the fire in their blood glowed forth. And in this air which wraps a veil of both awe and desire around every form, and if it be but a blossom-laden branch, we divine the look with which Paris, the lonely shepherd, measured the three goddesses, when they stepped towards him out of the glittering light, high-breasted in their pride and jealousy of one another, and ready to give all to win the victor's prize.

What a situation! - And does it not bear like a diamond, uncrushed by any weight, the whole of the stupendous and dark happenings of the Iliad? Yes, these myths are true in another way than we thought. We loved them as the products of harmonious imaginative power. But there is more of magic in them, than we knew, a magic which enters man's soul straight from the actual. Before the first rays of the sun touch the heights of Parnassus, there is really something of the colour of the rose that floods its uppermost summit. This colour is exactly that of the living rose-petal, and exactly only two fingers wide, two fingers of a woman lightly laid on the bulwark of a ship, and just as light as the movement of a woman's hand. And it requires here a lesser effort of fantasy to see Eos fly westwards with rosy fingers, rapid as a dove, than to imagine a burning bush in the semi-darkness of our eternal winter afternoons.

But this journey of ours is no journey to the picturesque. We are searching here for one of the sublime experiences of humanity. We wish to place our hand on the sanctuary. We wish to assist at festivals which, in their austerity and beauty, verge on the sublime. We wish to take direct, nay, physical part in that which we guessed at more than we experienced whilst deciphering our Aeschylus. A restless impatience stirs in us to discover the sublimely spiritual in forms. In this impatience lies the yearning of how many generations. And is it not above all Schiller's bold and great soul rising within us? His visions of the antique, this ever-recurring petulant demand to find somewhere on earth the incorporated idea of the beautiful which his inner eye was so strong to discern. Let us beware of confounding these things with the irresponsible "writings" of the average literati. Schiller believed what he wrote. And he unfurled his whole ego like a far-flung flag in the tumult of a perpetual spiritual battle in which future and past are blended, and in which we too stand somewhere.

The idea of recognizing in physical traces a spiritual sublimeness loses here on the soil of Greece its exaggeration akin to arrogance. And, indeed, in this light the spiritual is more embodied and the physical more spiritualized than elsewhere in the world. If, under these skies, we turn over the leaves of one of Pindar's odes glorifying a pugilistic combat, the battle itself and the gigantic struggle issues forth into the very middle of this silver flame of poetry. The Olympic plain where they met brings into close relationship Athens, of which we think we know so much, and Sparta, of which we know so little. We surmise that they were both Greeks, and that their locked embrace and the mortal combat that slew them both was Greek life in its highest sense. Our faded Winckelmann vision which drew the beautiful too near to the charming, and to an ennervated charmingness at that - too near to Canova! - a vision that still lives in us somewhere has made us forget how closely beauty and strength, as well as strength with all that is terrible and threatening, to life are related: how could it otherwise bring life to its knees?

But here, before these stupendous remains we recollect that Castor and Pollux were Helen's brothers, that they were robbers of women and mighty fighters. If we think of Antigone here, we swear she was a sister of Achilles, and the defiance with which she met her king is of no less force than that of Thetis' son who stayed in his tent in spite of the commander and a hundred princes. These nameless ephebes, these "dew sisters" from the Acropolis, these Corai virgin priestesses, dug up from the ruins of Persian destruction, are magnificent beings, and powerful ones withal. There is something unactainable about them, something more incomprehensible than the most beautiful Gothic figures. And also something more complete. Yet never before were the spiritual and physical within us so moved in the deepest roots, where they are united, by the sight of the physical. This completeness is the last word of the culture in which we are rooted. Here, neither the Occident nor the Orient are alone, and we belong to both worlds.

Perhaps, with a romantic eye, we still conceive a complete figure that rises up in marble before us. Perhaps we vest it with too much of our consciousness, of our "soul". Let us be careful not to confound the infinitely different worlds. But even a cool and yet very attentive look fixed on one of these relics: an arm with a hand, a half-nude shoulder, the knee of a goddess under a flowing garment, even this cool look which refuses any share of harmonious contact with this art feels, after a few seconds, absolutely in tune with this conception of completeness in which both spirit and senses have an equally wonderfully harmonious part. These hands, as beautiful as they are strong, and so unostentatious of strength or beauty, how they justify Anaxagoras' words: man is the cleverest being because he has hands. And how freely the vous of Anaxagoras moves in these wonderful organs of the body. They are indeed organs, tools, but not blunt ones; and are no less spiritual than words. The sight of these supple, powerful, clever princely limbs reveals to us the philosophical language of the Greeks flashing like a chain of mountain peaks. Verily, here the spiritual and physical footsteps lead along the same path, and they all lead to the lion's den.

Greek landscape, as it is to-day, may be disappointing when first seen. But it is only the first glance that disappoints. Present-day Greece is a woodless country, and has thus a certain hardness in its outlines, which, it is true, is bathed in the life-giving light. In vain we search for the "swelling hills" which enchanted Fallmerayer, when gazing across the country from the shore, or the chestnut thicket, and the platanes and oaks interspersed with a thousand bushes, into which he descended from a mountain cliff. But the swelling hills were near Trebizond, and he looked into the woods from the summit of Athos. Still today the peninsula of Volo - for centuries the forest reserve of the DowagerSultaness - has its famous chestnut woods; all this lies outside of Greece-proper. But Attica had only one little wood left, and this was set on fire during the war to remove the King whose country-house was situated in its midst. The erst-
while "leafy Boeotia" is a stony basin with here and there a wheat-field and an olive-grove. But this hard and parched landscape has elements of beauty in it, the memory of which never fades.

I have not set foot on the soil of Sparta, and I have only seen the summit of the Taygetus glittering in the air, but at intervals of years I have read more than once the pages Maurice Barrès wrote about it, and which are the most beautiful words in the beautiful book he calls the "Journey to Sparta". They are the most complete example of a description which is both enthusiastic and restrained at the same time. They depict a mountain-range, and at the same time the soul of an uncommon man who sees these mountains. The jagged summits and the crevices of the Taygetus spoke a language to this politician, this intellectual and visionary, to completely grasp which his soul was tuned. Nothing can be less vague and sentimental than the first striking effect the view of this mountain-range has upon him. The Taygetus affects him, as young Achilles hidden among the women of Scyros was affected by the sudden sight of spear and lance. His description is, like the work of a true author, unique and untranslatable. I feel how I spoil it, and yet I cannot resist inserting here the paragraph I have in mind for the sake of that which it deals with.
"The valley's breadth of Lacedaemon through which, as a little river, the Eurotas wends its way along its too broad gravel bed is confined to the east by the Menelaion Mountains and to the west by the Taygetus. It is but a few miles broad, and its course is ever winding. Little laughing vales run southwards between hard hills. This sinuosity calls forth the soul; and the onward flow blends well with the reddish Menelaion which rises up in pathetic terraces. But all this romanticness recedes far from the peaceful sublimity of the Taygetus.

The Taygetus range rests on a mighty base showing dark folds to the eye. Cutting into its lower regions are deep crevices filled with blue gloom and woods; tall cliffs and strong bastions are its forts. These mighty outworks are pushed far into the plain as though ready to attack, and on the slopes are single villages that seem like dying heroes sinking wounded to the ground. On such a foundation dread precipices rise up, and above these, as a third zone, the region of glaciers and avalanches rises, and yet as highest above these the chain of steep ordered summits ranges itself admirably in its multiplicity of forms . . . . What power and greatness lies in the upward course of this elevation. How calmly it rests its weighty bulk upon the plain that caresses its feet voluptuously, and how it points its seven snowy caps skywards! The boldness of a writer will never be able to do justice to this brillancy and this forceful power, never be able to correctly depict these decisively pure-toned colours that spurn every discordant shade, nor the grandiose essential differences as they calmly range from where the orange grows up to the sparkling ice-walls."

I shall not attempt to place next to these lines a second description having the heroic of the Greecian landscape for its theme. They tell us all that one can be said about this landscape without digressing into the romantic. And it is on the
slopes of the Taygetus that our imagination - and that of Goethe too - sets the stage for the marriage of Faust and Helen. But I once attempted to describe a more gentle element of this landscape, and one that is often repeated, so that those who have travelled in Greece may be reminded of this or that landscape. I mean the approach at eventide to some solitary monastery. And I will recall both for myself and those who read these lines that still vivid description of that tender scene.
"We had ridden this day nine or ten hours, and had encountered nought in the flat stony hollow of the sloping mountain valley save once in a while a shepherd with his flock, or a tortoise crossing our path from underneath small sweet-smelling shrubs. Towards evening we saw a distant village, but we left it behind. Then we heard the sound of sheep-bells both near and far, and our mules mended their pace and inhaled the perfume-laden air that came from the narrowing vale: the perfume of acacias, strawberries and thyme. We felt how the bluish mountains closed in on us, and that this valley was the end of the whole way. For a long time we rode between two wild-rose hedges, and then between low walls behind which were fruit gardens. An old man a with gardener's knife in his hand was wading breast-deep in blossoming hedge-roses. The monastery was sure to be quite near, and we were surprised not to see it. Suddenly a door opened in the wall on our left, and a monk was leaning in the doorway. He was young, had a fair beard cut in a manner that reminded one of Byzantine portraits, a Roman nose, and unsteady blue eyes. He greeted us by bowing and stretching out both arms. We dismounted and he preceded us. We entered a passage, and into a room, and saw that we were in the middle of a monastery. It was built into the mountain, and our room, which, entered from the garden, was on a level with the ground and two stories high over the courtyard. The old church, with the glory of the evening light upon its thousand years old reddish walls and cupolas, enclosed one side, and the other three were composed of such houses as the one we stood in, and the little balconies were light blue or yellow, or bluegreen. Peace reigned everywhere, peace and joy sweetened by the perfume of flowers. Below, a fountain was plashing. Monks in long black garments, their high black cowls covering handsome faces adorned with jet black beards passed across the yard and vanished through the church-door, or they were leaning over balconjes, or passing down an open stairway. Half-loud voices in the church were beginning to sing the psalms set to an old melody. The voices rose and sank, and there was something infinite, equally far from sorrow as from joy, something solemn which seemed to come from eternity and continue to sound forth thus into eternity. Across the yard the boys' voices echoed the melody which drifted through an open window... We were in the midst of the present, and we were surrounded by the sacred customs of the Oriental Christian Church But the gestures, the sublimeness, the language, and even the rhythm of the obeisance - the proskynese - is Byzantium, and is older than Byzantium The little owls were calling in the garden, the cicadas began their chirp; where the evening star
hung, the ridge of Parnassus was shining invisible behind dark mountains, and there in the flank of the mountain lay Delphi. Nowhere were we apparently further from that sunken world, and never indeed so sentiently near. And when the head of a beautiful choir-boy appeared at an open window, graceful and self-confident, one who had echoed the sacred melody before, nothing was more natural than to confound him with another, and to vest another form with these customs which seemed to us mysterious and yet comprehensible. And never a shadow-like picture, at least of grey antiquity, was so tangibly near as when - in the Phocaen temple vestibule - we believed for a moment we saw in the body Sophocles' boy Ion, and thought we breathed the same air with him.

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## Athens

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Athen
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Athens
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=


## Athen

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## Athens

Entrence to the Odeum of Herodes Attlcus with view of Nike Temple



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Athen
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Athem
Olympielon. Südfront



Athen



Athen
Eingang zum Theselon




Athen
Kleine Metropolis. Q. bis 12. Jahrhundert


## Athènes







Athen
Kirche Panagia Megalo Monastli


Athen
Griechin In aller Nationaltracht

Athens
Greek woman in anclent national costume



Athen
Grlechin in alter Nationaltrecht.

Athens
Greek women In enclent national costume



Athen


Le Portique ou "cap des colonnas.. Sunion


Athen
Sunlon. Poseldion-Tempel. Elingeng

Athens
Sunion. Temple of Poseidon, entrance








Daphni Kirchenlnneres

Daphni
Interior of the Church

Daphni




Korinth
Apoliotempel, Innen, von Nord-Osten

Temple d'Apollon, intérieur, du nord-est





Korinth
Quellnaus der Peirene

Corinth
Source House of the Peirene

Corinthe
La source de Peirène




Mykenä
Anslcht der Burg von Suden

Mycène
Vue du sud










Mistra
Pantanossa Convent


Mistra
Mistra








Olympla
Zwei Saulen vom Tempel der Hera

Two Columns of the Temple of Hera







Olympia
Hermes des Praxiteles

Olympia


## Olympia

Nike des Paonios 420 v Chr

Olympia
Nike of Paeonlos, 420 B. C

Nike per péonlos, 420 avent J. C



Olympia
Athene (von elner Metope)

Olympia Athene (from e metope)



Delphi
Rundbeu fur de Welhgeschenke von Argos








Delphi
Vew from the Athenian Treasure House


Delphi

Delphi
Column, with view of the Gymmeslum and Marmarion

Tambour a colonnet avec vue sur le Gymnase et Marmarion











Chalkis
Byz. Lowenrellef




Volo

## Bemaltes Grabmal
























Saloniki

Transept of the Hagia Sophia 5 th . Cent


## Saloniki

## Salonique



Saloniki Tark, Moschee


Saloniki
Sogen. "Rotunde" (St Georgskirche) mit Minarett und torkischen Grabern

## Saioniki

So-called "Rotunda" (St George'a church) with Minaret and Turkish Tombs

Salonique

La „Roionde" (Eglise St Georges) avec ie minaret et les tombeaux turcs


Saloniki
Hagia Sofia 5. Jahrh.


Saloniki
Tschaurch-Monastir



Korfu


Leucas




Aegina
Blick vom Aphala Tempel auf das Meer

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Thera



Thera
Im Kioster Hoslos Elias

Thera
In the Hoslos Elias Convent







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Kreta
Palast von Phalstos


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## DUE AS STAMPED BELOW


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